

# Travel



**5 PAGES** OF HOLIDAY IDEAS  
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## GO FOR GOLD



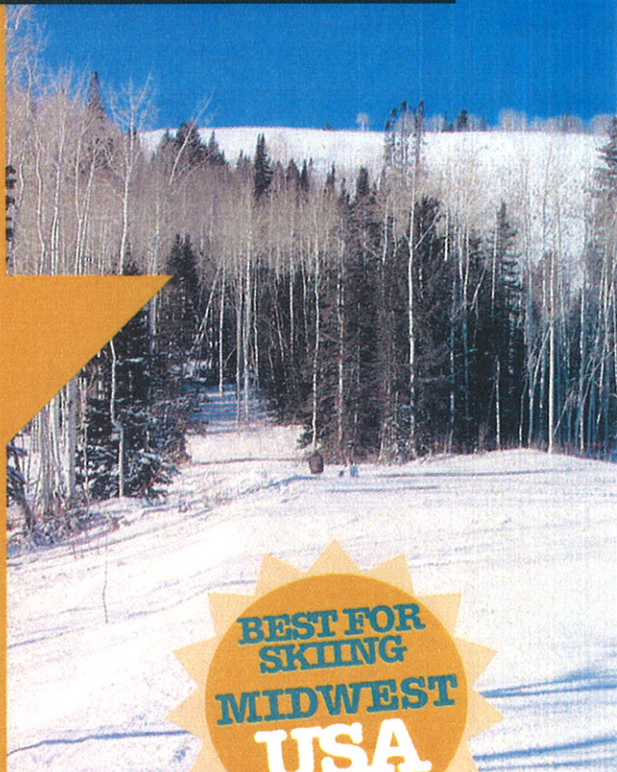
**FANCY** a white-knuckle ride in a four-man bobsleigh down the Olympic course? Or the biathlon combination of cross-country skiing and target shooting? Or maybe you think you could fly higher than Eddie the Eagle doing a ski jump. Salt Lake City's Olympic facilities include all of the above. Luckily, during my visit to Soldier Hollow in the Heber Valley there was not enough snow for me to do the gruelling biathlon ski circuit but I compensated by sprinting 100 metres before trying to settle my heart rate enough to fire five shots at a tiny target. Not far from Park City is the Utah Olympic Park where, like me (above), you can sample the bobsleigh run. Don't worry, you don't have to do the sprint start and jump in. Or take a starter course in ski-jumping (not on the 120m main slope, obviously).

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**PETER FENTON** enjoys great slopes, fine food and celeb-spotting. And he finally forgives The Osmonds...

# Utah very much



**BEST FOR  
SKIING  
MIDWEST  
USA**

**UTAH** had a great deal of making up to do. While teenagers in the Swinging 60s had the Beatles, the Stones and Jimi Hendrix, my generation had to suffer The Osmonds.

Donny crooning Puppy Love. Jimmy squeaking Long Haired Lover From Liverpool. Marie whining Paper Roses.

If none of the above rings a bell, be grateful. Fresh out of Ogden, near Salt Lake City, the clean-cut singing group with the dazzling teeth haunted the charts throughout the 70s until the punk revolution spat them out.

So for me that was Utah: Mormons, The Osmonds, oh yes and land speed attempts on the desert salt flats. Until now.

Because Utah's got snow. The greatest snow on earth, if the state slogan is to be believed. It's always had snow, of course, it's just that the Osmonds' teeth were whiter. And as a fairly niche destination with UK ski tour operators, it is still largely undiscovered by Brits.

The Wasatch range, on the western edge of the Rockies overlooking Salt Lake City, is home to



**CLASSES:** The area is great for youngsters

some of America's finest ski resorts. Park City hosted the 2002 Winter Olympics. Millionaires' playground Deer Valley is regularly voted America's top resort. And Robert Redford liked Mount Timpanogos so much, he bought a lump of it. But the common perception is still of a rather dour,

religion-flavoured destination. So let's correct a few common misconceptions straight away.

While I was in Salt Lake City, no one tried to sell me a Book of Mormon or take me to a prayer meeting. Although the Temple HQ of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is in Salt Lake City, less than half its population is LDS, as the Mormons are known locally. Nor do they all have a harem full of wives. Polygamy was outlawed at the end of the 19th century.

Secondly, and more importantly to some of us, it is not a "dry" state. Beer, provided it does not exceed 3.2 per cent alcohol by volume, is freely available at bars for a one-time five

dollar "club membership" charge, payable by one person in your party.

The main street of Park City alone has 100 bars and restaurants. As the slogan of locally-brewed ale Polygamy Porter goes: Why have just one?

Utah's ski resorts are nothing if not accessible. Downtown Salt Lake City is a five-minute drive

from the airport. Within an hour after landing there, you can be in one of 11 ski resorts surrounding the city.

Forget the long transfers associated with Colorado, California or many European ski centres. However, there is still no direct flight from the UK to SLC, though a new service from Paris has been a success.

The resorts have good shuttle bus services but if you really want to explore the area, rent a car or 4x4.

So is it worth the effort to get there? Here's a look at the major ski areas around Salt Lake City...

### BEST FOR POWDER SKIERS ALTA/SNOWBIRD

Utah's snow benefits from what is called the Lake Effect. Storms sweep across from the Pacific, the Nevada desert shrinks the droplets then rising air from the Salt Lake gives it all a turbo boost before it hits the mountains. The result is huge dumps of dry, powdery snow - and Alta gets the cream of it, a record 700ins last season. One

of the oldest resorts in the US. Alta maintains a traditional flavour.

with snowboards banned. It attracts powder hounds and, as well as good intermediate and beginner pistes, has some great off-piste access including thrilling steep 'n' deep chutes.

Best of the accommodation is the Alta Lodge. Although it has been greatly extended from its origins 70 years ago, the wood panelled rooms of the original shack, tastefully refurbished, are still in use.

Alta's neighbour in Little Cottonwood Canyon is a larger ski area, better suited to intermediate and advanced skiers. Its large capacity tram (cable car) means lift queues are rare.

### GOOD FOR CELEBRITY SPOTTING DEER VALLEY

Deer Valley has acres of ski slopes groomed in perfect "corduroy" stripes and flowing down towards jaw-droppingly lavish holiday homes owned by Hollywood bigwigs and hedge



